



Citation for published version:

Ramsden, A 2009 'Were people satisfied with Moodle performance during October 2009?' University of Bath, Bath, U. K.

Publication date:
2009

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Were people satisfied with Moodle performance during October 2009?

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December 17, 2009

Information Sheet

This working paper was written by members of the e-learning community at the University of Bath. If you'd like to access other working papers, presentations or posters given by the e-learning team at the University of Bath see our Online Publications Store, <http://opus.bath.ac.uk/view/divisions/elearning.html>.

If you have any questions about this paper then please contact the author(s) directly

Thanks to members of the e-Learning Team at the University of Bath who commented on earlier drafts.

Summary

A user survey was run during November, 2009. It identified three key observations (see below), and a clear action on the Moodle Operations Manager to set a target for the start of the next academic year to deliver a service where a proportionally higher number of user rate themselves as more satisfied with the Moodle Service in terms of accessibility and responsiveness. This will require a number of work packages, including a review of the current Moodle Service architecture by the e-learning and BUCS teams.

The observations are;

Observation 1: the large majority of people are very satisfied with the Moodle service.

Observation 2: a key determining factor for responses was not solely concerned with service performance (responsiveness and accessibility), but also functionality. Interestingly, service performance was the key factor for those who were least satisfied

Observation 3: the area where people were least satisfied was in terms of service responsiveness compared to availability or their general views on Moodle service.

Introduction

The aim of the survey was to inform the e-learning Team about user satisfaction with the Moodle's performance at the start of this academic year (2009-10). In particular, how satisfied were people with the way the service performed, in terms of its availability and responsiveness during this peak period? The outcomes will be disseminated throughout the University and feed into our Moodle Development Plan (2009/10).

For background, we were aware there were some periods when service performance was very slow. During the first week of the new academic year the service was incredibly busy. For instance, the average number of unique users per day on to Moodle during the first four days of term was 4771 (approximately 40% of our student FTE). Analysis of log activity indicates concurrent users on the system was very high. As an outcome of slow performance the e-learning Team and BUCS team tweaked the core code to improve responsiveness (see <http://blogs.bath.ac.uk/moodle>).

Methodology

Appendix 1 reproduces the survey. The survey ran between 4th and 17th November, 2009. It was authored collaboratively by members of the e-Learning Team at the University of Bath. Publicity for the survey was through a post on the Moodle Service Blog, a linked resource released on Moodle (the post log-in page), a forum post in the Moodle Staff Area course, and an email to the University of Bath's Directors of Studies (UG, PG). We should note the respondents were self selecting group and it is a small part of the total Moodle user population. Therefore, this is not a truly representative sample.

In total, 208 responses were collected of which 139 (69%) were students, 60 (29%) academic/teaching staff, and 9 (2%) support staff.

The first question identified how satisfied people were with the Moodle service during the period? Figure 1, illustrates the responses;

Figure 1: Level of satisfaction with the Moodle Service

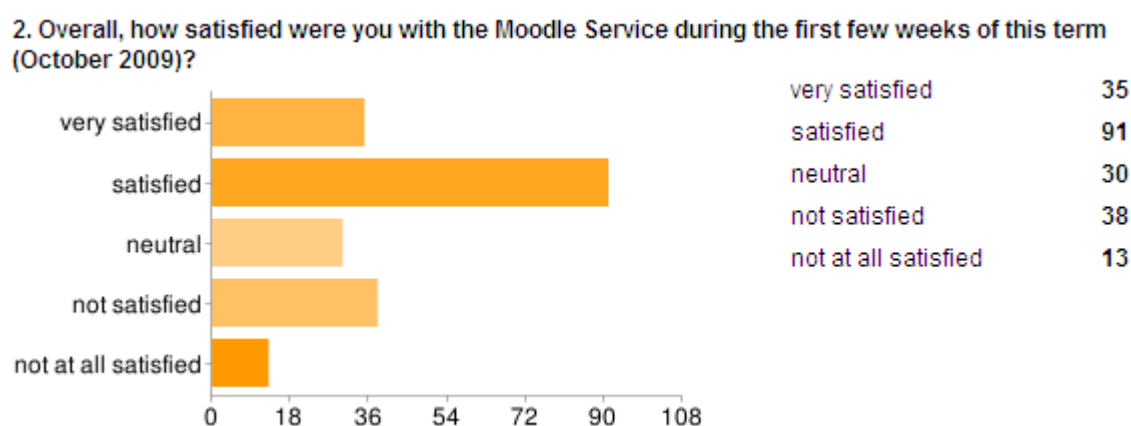


Figure 1 indicates the majority (60%) were either satisfied or very satisfied with the Moodle Service. Even more pleasing was only 6% were *not satisfied at all*. This leads to observation 1, where significant changes do not need to be made.

Observation 1: the large majority of people are very satisfied with the Moodle service.

To better understand the story behind the headline, the follow up question was asked, *could you explain the answer to the previous question*.

The responses were tagged by type of respondent (staff, student), how satisfied they were and if their free text comments focused more on the performance of the service (i.e, being able to access the service and the speed at which they could complete tasks), or the type of tasks they need to complete (including comments on the user interface).

The breakdown of responses suggests for the "not at all satisfied" group (staff=5, students=8) the majority of the responses made reference to the service performance (12 out of the 13 respondents). However, references to service performance to justify people's answers declined for the other groups. For instance, in the *not satisfied* group (staff=15. Student=23) 23 out of the 38 responses focused on service reasons. While for the "neutral" group the proportion of the non-service performance reasons to justify the selection of their responses increased to nearly a 1:1 ratio.

The following quotes are from the most satisfied group and indicate a very positive perception,

- All of my registered subjects showed up on Moodle without any interaction, all of the relevant course materials were uploaded in time. The layout was clear, the built-in calendar is satisfactory and everything seemed to work fine. Occasional downtimes are understandable and did not affect my studies.
- Didn't have any problems with accessing the material I wished to
- In general I was very impressed with this system. It is great!!!! There was just one instance in October when I could not access Moodle from home or from the university.
- It worked very well and was very helpful.
- Moodle performed without fail whenever I needed it to.
- Never had any problems accessing the material I needed, as a new student who hasn't seen moodle before I was very impressed with the availability of resources.

What does this tell us? It suggests for a group of people the service performance is a key determinant of their level of satisfaction with the service. However, the picture mixed, as many people focus on non-service issues to determine their satisfaction level. Therefore, observation 2 is made.

Observation 2: a key determining factor for responses was not solely concerned with service performance (responsiveness and accessibility), but also functionality. Interestingly, service performance was the key factor for those who were least satisfied.

The response pattern outlined previously was mirrored when specific questions are asked concerning responsiveness and availability. Overall, for both these indicators suggest the proportion of *very satisfied* increased when compared to the general response question.

However, the pattern was not even. Figure 3 indicates a higher proportion of users were very satisfied with the service (33%).

The pattern for satisfaction shifts slightly towards the satisfied / neutral choices when examined by responsiveness (Figure 3), in comparison to accessibility.

Figure 2: Level of satisfaction by availability of Moodle Service

4. How satisfied were you overall with the AVAILABILITY of Moodle during the first few weeks of this term (October 2009)

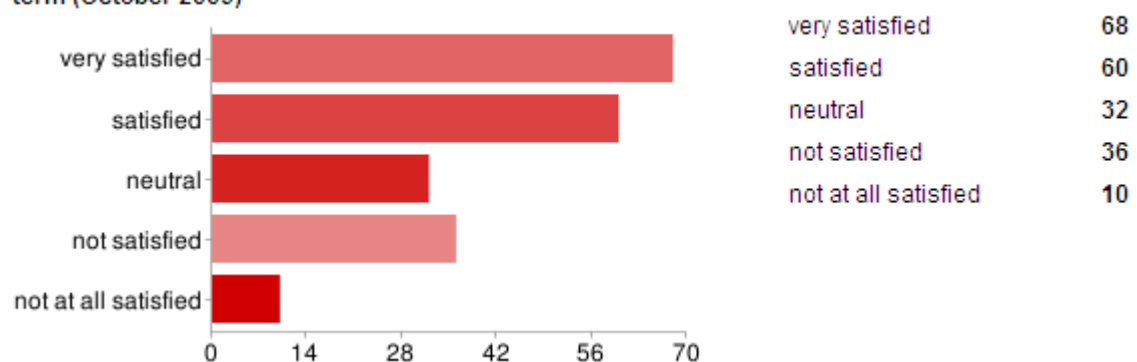
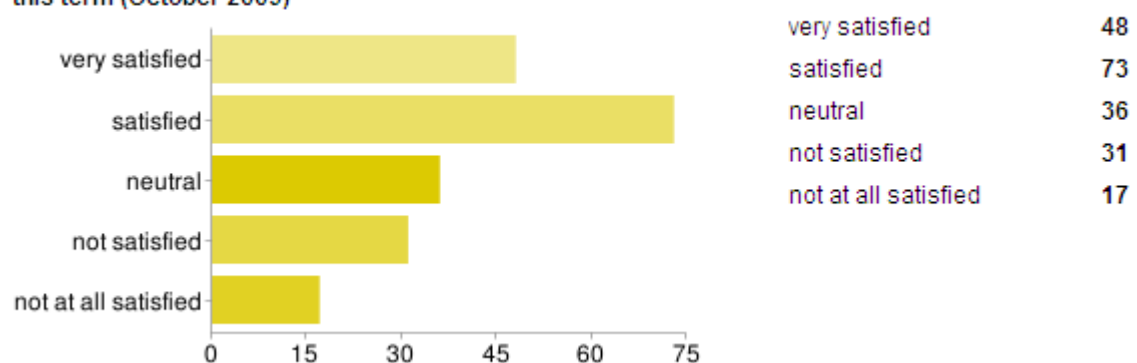


Figure 3: Level of satisfaction by responsiveness of the Moodle Service

6. How satisfied were you overall with the RESPONSIVENESS of moodle during the first few weeks of this term (October 2009)



It can be argued this is not a surprise as the system was always available over the period, i.e., it didn't stop working, however, at some periods it became very slow, i.e., the responsiveness declined. In fact, the not at all satisfied group was the highest proportion when questioned on responsiveness compared to accessibility. This suggests poor responsiveness of the service is the key determinant is a key determinant of user satisfaction.

Observation 3: more people are not at all satisfied with the level of responsiveness compared to availability or their general views on Moodle service.

Conclusions & Recommendations

The findings suggest we (the Moodle Service provider) still have a significant way to go in terms of the responsiveness of our service at the peak times of the year. It is pleasing to see evidence for a large number of users being very satisfied with the service. However, there are a small number who are not at all satisfied with the responsiveness of the system. This might be a small number of people, however, they should not be ignored.

The target for the start of the next academic year is to undertake the work to deliver a service where a higher proportion of users rate it as being more responsive than this year. The survey will be repeated at the start of November 2010.

Appendix 1: The Survey

1. Please state if you are a member of staff or a student at the University of Bath
2. Overall, how satisfied were you with the Moodle Service during the first few weeks of this term (October 2009)? (very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, not satisfied, not at all satisfied)
3. Please explain your answer to the previous question.
4. How satisfied were you overall with the AVAILABILITY of Moodle during the first few weeks of this term (October 2009)? (very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, not satisfied, not at all satisfied)
5. If you were not completely satisfied, what impact did this have on your work / teaching?
6. How satisfied were you overall with the RESPONSIVENESS of Moodle during the first few weeks of this term (October 2009)? (very satisfied, satisfied, neutral, not satisfied, not at all satisfied)
7. If you were not completely satisfied, what impact did this have on your work / teaching?
8. If you would like to discuss the performance of the Moodle service with a member of the e-learning team please give your email address